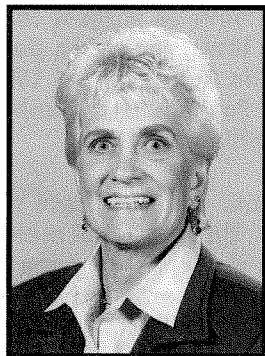


Hammerstrom's

for the people
in the 17th Senate District

Hotline



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BUCKLE UP, MICHIGAN! For many, the summer season is a chance to take family vacations, or visit friends or a favorite beach or park. Sadly, when travel increases, the risk of traffic crashes also increases. According to the state Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP), traffic crashes are still a leading cause of death for Michigan residents. It is reported that there are about 43,000 traffic fatalities annually across the country and about 1,300 in Michigan. The majority of the state's fatal crashes involve drivers who do not use safety belts or helmets, use alcohol or drugs, or use excessive speed. In recent years, however, statistics show that safety belt use has increased and reached a record high in 2003, and now stands at nearly 85 percent. Should Michigan reach 90 percent belt use, it would mean an estimated 50 fewer traffic deaths every year. That's a life saved nearly every week.

DID YOU KNOW? Someone dies in a traffic crash in the United States every 12 minutes. Someone dies in a traffic crash in Michigan every seven hours.

WEST NILE VIRUS UPDATE As summer begins, there is much concern and news once again in regard to West Nile Virus (WNV). WNV is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause inflammation of the brain and/or spinal cord. The virus was first seen in the United States in the fall of 1999 and was first detected in Michigan in 2001, with the first human case reported in August 2002. The virus is spread between birds mostly through the bite of an infected mosquito. When the level of virus circulating amongst birds and mosquitoes becomes high, horses and humans can be accidentally infected. The virus is extremely dangerous to persons with compromised immune systems, such as the elderly, children, and those suffering from illness. The state Department of Community Health (DCH) reported its first detected WNV case of 2004 in May, when a crow was identified as a positive carrier of the virus in Saginaw County. For more information in regard to the virus, including steps to avoid risk of infection and how to report a dead bird or mammal, please visit www.michigan.gov/wnv, or call, toll-free, 1-888-668-0869.

STIFFER PENALTIES FOR FORGED STATE IDS Anyone who forges state ID cards will now be subject to the same penalties as those who forge drivers' licenses under legislation recently signed into law. Previously, penalties for forging drivers' licenses generally were more severe than for state ID cards. Public Acts 149 and 150 of 2004 increase the penalties for forging state ID cards to match those for forging drivers' licenses and eliminate inconsistencies between these nearly identical crimes. The new laws will take effect immediately.

NEW LAW GIVES RESIDENTS PRIVACY FROM NEW TECHNOLOGY Michigan residents will now have their privacy protected from new electronic technology, including cell phones and digital cameras, through a bill recently signed into law. Senate Bill 918, now Public Act 155 of 2004, creates specific prohibitions and criminal penalties for acts of electronic voyeurism. Such acts include capturing or transmitting a visual image of a person undressed or wearing only undergarments. Examples of places where one might normally have a reasonable expectation of privacy include private or public restrooms, showers, tanning beds, and locker rooms. The legislation also prohibits distributing such images and creates stronger penalties for distribution, as well as provides stronger penalties for repeat offenders. The new law goes into effect immediately.

If you would like to receive future issues of Hammerstrom's Hotline via e-mail,
please contact me at SenBHammerstrom@senate.michigan.gov